The Four Fears That Undermine Agility

Ryan Gottfredson
1. There are two sides of agility

Agility

Process Side

Psychological Side
2. The psychological side is as important as, if not more important than, the process side.
Introductory Introspective Questions

1. Are your agile processes limited by psychological factors?
2. Do you have a way to assess the degree to which your employees are psychologically wired for agility?
3. Do you know what you need to focus on to improve the psychological wiring for agility?
Our Focus And Purpose

Process Side | Psychological Side

Ensuring we are mentally wired for agility

1st: We will discuss a primary and foundational psychological barrier to agility: Fear

2nd: We will discuss how we can help our people rise above fear to become more agile
Raise your hand if you agree…

Some people are more agile than other people
But…

If you were to ask your employees, “Are you an agile employee?”

How many of them would say, “not really?”
Psychological Deep Dive

Why are some people more agile than other people?
Foundational Role of Mindsets

- Mindsets
- Thinking
- Behavior
- Agility
4 Sets of Mindsets

Low Agility

Negative

Fixed
Closed
Prevention
Inward

Positive

Growth
Open
Promotion
Outward

High Agility
# Mindset → Desires

## Self-Protection Mode

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>- Mindset</th>
<th>Org/Team/Emp A</th>
<th>Org/Team/Emp B</th>
<th>+ Mindset</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fixed</td>
<td>Desire to look good</td>
<td>or Desire to learn &amp; grow</td>
<td>Growth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closed</td>
<td>Desire to be right</td>
<td>or Desire to find truth</td>
<td>Open</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prevention</td>
<td>Desire to avoid problems</td>
<td>or Desire to reach goals</td>
<td>Promotion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inward</td>
<td>Desire to get ahead</td>
<td>or Desire to lift others</td>
<td>Outward</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Self-protective desires  

Fears that kill agility
# Self-Protective Fears

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mindset</th>
<th>Self-Protection Desire</th>
<th>Fears</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fixed</td>
<td>Desire to look good</td>
<td>Looking bad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closed</td>
<td>Desire to be right</td>
<td>Being wrong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prevention</td>
<td>Desire to avoid problems</td>
<td>Desire to having problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inward</td>
<td>Desire to get ahead</td>
<td>Getting passed up</td>
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</table>

Only 2.5% of people are in the top quartile for all four sets of mindsets.
Collective Mindset Results

Questions

- Where are we the most self-protective?
- What does this say about our willingness to be agile?
- What does this say about our ability to navigate effectively into the future?
Collective Mindset Results

- 79% have two+ mindsets below the median
- 95% have one+ mindsets below the median
## Self-Protective Fears Limit Agility

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mindset</th>
<th>Self-Protective Desire</th>
<th>Fears</th>
<th>Impact on Agility</th>
<th>Agility Requires</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fixed</td>
<td>Desire to look good</td>
<td>Looking bad</td>
<td>Not willing to fail</td>
<td>Failure at times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closed</td>
<td>Desire to be right</td>
<td>Being wrong</td>
<td>Not willing to explore new ideas</td>
<td>New ideas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prevention</td>
<td>Desire to avoid problems</td>
<td>Desire to having problems</td>
<td>Not willing to wade through messiness of trial &amp; error</td>
<td>Wading through trial &amp; error</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inward</td>
<td>Desire to get ahead</td>
<td>Getting passed up</td>
<td>Now willing to be patient with self or others</td>
<td>Patience with self &amp; others</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Why are some people more agile than other people?

Some people have mental habits of processing that are wired for self-protection instead of agility.
The Psychology of Agility

Why are some people more agile than other people?

How many are you familiar with this term: Window of Tolerance?
Window of Tolerance

- **Self-Protection Mode**
  - **Hyperarousal**

- **Window of Tolerance**
  - **Zone of Cognitive and Emotional Control**

- **Self-Protection Mode**
  - **Hypoarousal**
A Key to Agility

Having a wide window of tolerance for:

Self-Protection Mode
Hyperarousal

• Failure

• New ideas

• Wading through trial & error

• Slow progress from self or others

Self-Protection Mode
Hypoarousal

WINDOW OF TOLERANCE
ZONE OF COGNITIVE AND EMOTIONAL CONTROL
Our Focus And Purpose

Ensuring we are mentally wired for agility

1st: We will discuss a primary and foundational psychological barrier to agility: Fear-fueled mindsets

2nd: We will discuss how we can help our people rise above fear to become more agile
Rising Above Our Fears

How do we help leaders and employees:

• Widen their windows of tolerance
• Rise above their self-protective fears?
There are Two Forms of Development

Vertical Development

Mental Maturity

Knowledge

Skills

Horizontal Development
Horizontal Development

Horizontal: Adding more knowledge, skills, and competencies

- **Focus: Doing More**
Psychology of Agility

Horizontal

Mindsets

Thinking

Behavior

Agility
Vertical: Elevating a person’s ability to make meaning of their world in more cognitively and emotionally sophisticated ways

• Focus: Being Better
Psychology of Agility

- Mindsets
- Thinking
- Behavior
- Agility

Horizontal: Mindsets -> Behavior -> Agility
Vertical: Mindsets -> Thinking -> Behavior -> Agility
Improving Agility Individually & Collectively

When we look at improving agility through the lenses of mindsets, fears, & vertical development, 2 options appear:

1. Individual Level – Elevate Mindsets
2. Collective Level – Create the Right Conditions
Step #1: Help employees awaken to their mindsets

Individual Level

Mindsets
Thinking
Behavior
Agility
Step #1: Help employees awaken to their mindsets

**Negative**
- Fixed
- Closed
- Prevention
- Inward

**Positive**
- Growth
- Open
- Promotion
- Outward

FREE Personal Mindset Assessment
Individual Level

Step #2: Exercise
Collective Mindset Results – May To September

**May**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Fixed</th>
<th>Growth</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Closed/Open</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prevention/Promotion</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inward/Outward</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>45%</td>
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**September**

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<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Closed/Open</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>53%</td>
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<td>61%</td>
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<td>55%</td>
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Legend: Negative, Positive
We need to get our leaders and employees to:

• **Stop** looking at themselves (being self-protective)
• **Start** looking at a purpose bigger than themselves

This requires:

• Psychological safety (cultural removal of fear)
• Clear, inspirational, and stakeholder-centric purpose
For agility, organizational leaders need to focus more on the foundations than the fruits.

**Foundations**
- Psych Safety
- Purpose

**Fruits**
- Results
- Outcomes
- Performance

**Leading Indicators**

**Lagging Indicators**
Organizational Level

Great Example
Ed Catmull at Pixar & Disney Animation

“People are reluctant to explore what’s bugging them, for fear of being labeled complainers. I realized that this kind of thing, if left unaddressed, could fester and destroy Pixar.”
Organizational Level

Great Example
Ed Catmull at Pixar & Disney Animation

“In a fear-based, failure-averse culture, people will consciously or unconsciously avoid risk.”

“My job as a manager is to create a fertile environment, keep it healthy, and watch for the things that undermine it.”
Organizational Level

Great Example

Ed Catmull at Pixar & Disney Animation

“My goal is not to drive fear out completely, because fear is inevitable in high-stakes situations. What I want to do is loosen its grip on us. While we don’t want too many failures, we must think of the cost of failure as an investment in the future.”
We need to get our leaders and employees to:

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This requires:

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Our Focus And Purpose

Ensuring we are mentally wired for agility

1st: We will discuss a primary and foundational psychological barrier to agility: Fear-fueled mindsets

2nd: We will discuss how we can help our people rise above fear to become more agile
Most people have negative mindsets, or Neural wiring that is currently set up for self-protection (i.e., narrow windows of tolerance) 

These mindsets, neural wiring, and narrow windows of tolerance show up as self-protective fears that run counter to agility

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## Getting the Psychology of Agility Right

| Most people have negative mindsets, or neural wiring that is currently set up for self-protection (i.e., narrow windows of tolerance) |
|---|---|
| These mindsets, neural wiring, and narrow windows of tolerance show up as self-protective fears that run counter to agility |
| To elevate our mindsets, upgrade our wiring, and expand our windows of tolerance, we need to utilize vertical development |
| **Individually** |
| • Awaken to mindsets |
| • Exercise positive mindset neural connections |
| **Collectively** |
| • Environment of psych safety |
| • Clear, inspirational, & stakeholder-centric purpose |
Concluding Introspective Questions

1. Are your agile processes limited by psychological factors?

2. Do you know how prevalent self-protective mindsets & fears are in your organization?

3. Are you helping employees rise above their self-protective fears (vertical development)?

4. Are you creating the right conditions to limit employees’ need to be self-protective?
Want to Explore the Mindsets In Your Organization?

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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growth</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closed</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prevention</td>
<td></td>
<td>59%</td>
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<td>Promotion</td>
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<td></td>
<td>43%</td>
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<td>Outward</td>
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- Fixed/Growth
- Closed/Open
- Prevention/Promotion
- Inward/Outward

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Let’s Chat Some More

SPEAKER MEET AND GREET

RYAN GOTTFREDSON
THE FOUR FEARS THAT UNDERMINE AGILITY

WEDNESDAY, JULY 26, 2023
6:30-7:00PM

ICAGILE BOOTH EXHIBIT SPACE

www.ryangottfredson.com
Thank You

(801) 458-6321
ryan@ryangottfredson.com

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